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SUBJECT: FRENCH PREVIEW OF FEBRUARY FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL

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[1](#)B. PARIS 68

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Classified By: Political Counselor Andrew Young, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) On February 19, Mathieu Carmona, MFA Deputy Director for EU Common Foreign and Security Policy, provided the following preview for the February 22 Foreign Affairs Council meeting of EU foreign ministers:

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HAITI  
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[1](#)2. (SBU/NF) Following a briefing by Kristalina Georgieva, the new commissioner for humanitarian aid and crisis response, foreign ministers will discuss the EU strategy for the upcoming UN donors conference. Ministers will also examine the EU reaction to the disaster in Haiti, building on the discussion from the January Foreign Affairs Council. However, Carmona conceded that despite French support (ref B), it is "too early" for the creation of a European Civil Protection Force, an idea about which some member states, including Germany, have displayed reticence.

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IRAN  
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[1](#)3. (C/NF) The discussion on Iran will focus on internal politics, human rights, and the nuclear issue. Carmona said ministers will discuss the regime's intentions in light of its suppression of anti-government demonstrations on the anniversary of the revolution, as well as the recent attacks on European embassies. On human rights, France is especially worried about Iran's bid for a seat on the UN Human Rights Council, and plans to launch a wide demarche campaign to encourage potential supporters to vote no or abstain. Ideally, either all 27 EU member states or a smaller group of the most influential will join France. Ministers will also discuss the position of China on a potential vote on a sanctions resolution at the UN Security Council, especially in light of "current U.S.-China relations." Carmona said he understands that Lady Ashton's office is currently working on a list of possible EU sanctions for member states to consider following a UN resolution. He added that the Italians have now quietly joined France, the UK, and Germany on discussions of EU sanctions and are increasingly advocating a strong position, although Italian officials are not ready to be publicly associated with the "EU3" on this issue.

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UKRAINE  
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14. (SBU) Carmona said there is a general consensus in the EU that the elections in Ukraine were well run and high turnout underlined popular support for the democratic process. Carmona said France is especially interested in the future of EU-Ukraine relations, since negotiations on the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement were launched under the French EU presidency in September 2008, and France would like to see this agreement finalized. He said that Ukraine joining the European Energy Community would not necessarily give the EU more influence to push reform, but would encourage greater transparency in Ukraine's energy sector.

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AFGHANISTAN  
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15. (SBU/NF) Carmona said High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton would likely brief foreign ministers on EU assistance efforts in Afghanistan, and the selection process for the EU Special Representative (EUSR). He added that while an EUSR would probably not be chosen in time for the Foreign Affairs Council, the Lithuanian candidate, former FM Vygaudas Usackas, now seems to be the frontrunner.

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BELARUS  
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16. (C/NF) Foreign ministers are also expected to discuss the recent arrest in Belarus of members of the Polish minority. The French position is that this action needs to be condemned, as High Representative Ashton has already done, and that the EU needs to stress to Belarus that if it wants to benefit from the Eastern Partnership, the Belarussian authorities must respect human rights. However, Carmona said

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France is not in favor of any changes to overall EU policy towards Belarus, and said the strong Polish position is dictated by domestic politics in the run-up to the October 2010 presidential elections.  
RIVKIN